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FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEAL HANDBOOK

U.S.
DEPARTMENT
OF
AGRICULTURE
FOOD AND
NUTRITION
SERVICE
FNS-106
JUNE 1973

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2027

**FREE AND
REDUCED
PRICE
MEAL
HANDBOOK**

// = School lunches

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Introduction



INTRODUCTION

To carry out the Congressional intent that nutritious meals be available to every school child regardless of his family's ability to pay, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established regulations which must be observed in all schools that participate in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs or that receive commodities. These regulations are contained in Part 245, "Determining Eligibility for Free or Reduced Price Meals."

These regulations outline specific responsibilities for all levels of administration. These responsibilities are:

1. By May 15 of each year the Secretary of Agriculture announces minimum and maximum family size-income guidelines to be used in eligibility determinations for free and reduced price meals.
2. By July 1 of each year the State Educational Agencies and Food and Nutrition Service Regional Offices prescribe, within the Secretary's guidelines, family size-income standards for free and for reduced price meals. In addition, they must issue detailed instructions to the school food authorities on developing free and reduced price policies. Often these instructions are in the form of a prototype policy which school food authorities may use in entirety.
3. Prior to the opening of school, each local school food authority must develop a free and reduced price policy, including family size-income eligibility criteria, which are in conformance with State or Regional Office standards, for use in all schools under its administration which participate in the programs.

A policy must be developed (or the previous one amended) each year and submitted to the State Educational Agency or FNS Regional Office for approval. NO SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY SHALL BE REIMBURSED FOR ANY MEALS SERVED AFTER SEPTEMBER 30 OF ANY FISCAL YEAR NOR USE USDA COMMODITIES AFTER THAT DATE UNLESS THE SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY'S FREE AND REDUCED PRICE POLICY HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE STATE AGENCY OR FNS REGIONAL OFFICE.

This handbook has been prepared as an operational aid for use in developing and implementing free and reduced price policies. It contains a sample policy, sample letters to parents, sample applications, sample public releases, sample collection procedures, and a summary of administrative decisions made by the United States Department of Agriculture which affect the free and reduced price meal policies. The addendum contains the letter to parents and application in Spanish.

We hope you will find the information helpful and that it will provide direction in order that free and reduced price meal regulations are correctly implemented in all schools.

Administrative Guidance

Since Public Law 91-248 was enacted, a large number of operational questions have arisen. The salient issues and the resulting administrative decisions are presented in this section.



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE

*** What do I do at the beginning of the school year before applications have been approved?

Applications and letters should be sent to all parents of school children within the first week of school and action should be taken on all applications returned to the school within ten working days.

During the opening week of school, before applications for the new school year are received and approved, school officials should serve free and reduced price meals to children from families with approved applications on file from the previous school year.

*** What do I do if a family suffers a temporary financial hardship?

In cases of temporary hardships affecting the community such as strikes, civil disorders, natural disasters, etc., the school may grant approval for free and reduced price meals to families whose income falls within the family size-income eligibility criteria after deductions are made for the four hardship conditions cited in the policy. In these instances school officials may want to base eligibility on the family's current rate of income rather than on the family's annual income. The application, however, must be completed as usual.

When the temporary condition has been alleviated, families approved under this provision would be informed that the conditional approval will terminate within a specific time (e.g., 10 days) and those wishing continued assistance may apply for a continuance of their eligibility for free or reduced price meals by submitting a new application.

*** What do I do about granting free or reduced price meals to foster children?

In those cases where the welfare agency is legally responsible for the child, and the foster home is, in fact an extension of the welfare agency, the foster child shall be considered as a one-member family. The payments made by the welfare agency for the care of that foster child shall be considered as the income of that one-member family. Therefore, if the annual income of the foster child is not above the income level for free or reduced price meals of a one-member family as set forth in the income guidelines prescribed by the local school food authority, the foster child shall receive the benefits to which he is entitled.

In those cases where the welfare agency has placed a child in a permanent home and/or subsidizes the adoption of the child, the child shall be considered as a member of the household with whom he resides. The family size and total income of the family shall be used to determine the child's eligibility for free and reduced price meals.

*** What do I do when a father is serving in the military overseas?

In the case of a serviceman overseas, for the purpose of determining eligibility, the serviceman is not counted as a family member. As such, only the money he sends to his family is included in the family income.

*** What can I do if I have reason to believe that a family's application contains false information?

First, school officials must determine the child's eligibility based on the information submitted on the application and begin extending the appropriate benefits to that child.

However, once the application is approved, the current law and regulations allow the school officials to verify the information submitted by a family, if the school officials have reason to believe the application contains misinformation.

If after verification the school officials believe the information on the application is false, they have an obligation to challenge the continued eligibility of the child for free or reduced price meals. That challenge must be made under the fair hearing procedures set forth in the policy and the child would continue to receive free or reduced price meals pending the outcome of the challenge.

The parents of a child, of course, are able to request that school officials cease to provide their child with a free lunch (or change a free lunch to a reduced price lunch) because of an improvement in their circumstances. We would suggest that the school officials confirm the request in writing to the parent or make a notation on the child's application of the date and nature of the action requested by the parent.

*** Are there any restrictions on disciplining free and reduced price meal recipients?

FNS Instruction 791-1 prohibits the denial of free or reduced price meals, as disciplinary action, to children certified as eligible for such meals. Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act states that ". . . any child who is a member of a household which has an annual income not above the applicable family size income level set forth in the income poverty guidelines shall be served meals free or at reduced cost." Public Law 92-32 mandates the same requirement with respect to service of free or reduced price breakfasts. Thus, any disciplinary action which results in the denial of free or reduced price meals to eligible children is clearly contrary to the law.

When considering disciplinary action against any child certified as eligible for a free or reduced price meal, ensure that such action does not conflict with the mandate of the National School Lunch Act, as amended, and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended, with respect to providing all needy children with a free or reduced price meal.

*** Are there any restrictions against free and reduced price meal recipients working in the lunchroom?

The regulations state that free and reduced price meal recipients shall not be required to work for their meals.

Some schools employ student helpers for monetary or other compensation. In these cases, parents of all workers should be informed in writing that their children have volunteered to work in the lunchroom. That letter should state that if the child has been certified as eligible for a free or reduced price meal, his continued eligibility is in no way dependent upon his working. Additionally, that letter should not be a part of, or attached to, the free and reduced price letter to parents, application, or notice of approval/denial.

*** Do I have to serve reduced price meals?

Although the State Educational Agencies and FNS Regional Offices must prescribe eligibility standards for reduced price meals, offering those benefits is at the option of the school food authority. However, it should be noted that a school can extend benefits to a larger number of needy children if it serves reduced price meals.

*** What should I charge for a reduced price meal?

The reduced price shall be less than the full price of the lunch or breakfast and may not exceed 20 cents for lunch or 10 cents for breakfast. In addition, although the charge for a full price meal may be more in the high school than in the grade school, the charges for reduced price meals in the high schools and grade schools under one school food authority must be the same to ensure that all children from the same family receive the same benefits.

*** If I serve reduced price lunches do I have to serve reduced price breakfasts?

If your school participates in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program and you serve both free and reduced price lunches, you must also serve both free and reduced price breakfasts.

*** What do I do if I offer two lunches at different prices?

Frequently in an effort to increase participation schools offer students a choice between two Type A lunches and occasionally one is slightly more expensive than the other. In these cases, free and reduced price meal recipients must be given the same choice between meals at no charge or at the standard reduced price whichever the student regularly receives.

*** What is "income"?

"Income" means income before deductions for income taxes, employee's social security taxes, insurance premiums, bonds, etc. It includes the following:

- (1) Monetary compensation for services, including wages, salary, commission, or fees; (2) net income from non-farm self-employment; (3) net income from farm self-employment; (4) social security;
 - (5) dividends or interest on savings or bonds, income from estates or trust, or net rental income; (6) public assistance or welfare payments; (7) unemployment compensations; (8) Government civilian employee or military retirement or pensions or veterans' payments;
 - (9) private pensions or annuities; (10) alimony or child support payments; (11) regular contributions from persons not living in the household; (12) net royalties; and (13) other cash income. Other cash income would include cash amounts received or withdrawn from any source including savings, investments, trust accounts, and other resources, which would be available to pay the price of a child's meal.
- "Income" as used here does not include income used for the following special hardship conditions which

could not be reasonably anticipated or controlled by the household: (1) Unusually high medical expenses; (2) shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of income as defined herein; (3) special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child; and (4) disaster or casualty losses.

In applying guidelines, school food authorities may consider both the income of the family during the past 12 months and the family's current rate of income to determine which is the better indicator of the need for free and reduced price meals.

*** Can I certify a child to be eligible for free or reduced price meals, if the child's parents have not sent in an application and I know the family is needy?

After the letter to parents and applications have been disseminated and the school official has information available to him that a child, for whom an application has not been submitted, meets the eligibility criteria for free or reduced price meals he may certify the child as eligible. In such a situation, the school official should complete and file an application for that child setting forth the basis for that eligibility determination.

This does not give the school official authority to make eligibility determinations or certifications by categories or groups of children.

Prototype Policy

Each local school food authority must submit a free and reduced price policy to the State Agency or FNS Regional Office for approval prior to the opening of school. This section contains a sample of such a policy.



SAMPLE
POLICY STATEMENT FOR FREE
AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

The _____ has entered
(School Food Authority)
into agreement to participate in the National School Lunch Program, and/or School Breakfast Program, and/or to receive commodities donated by the United States Department of Agriculture and accepts responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction.

The School Food Authority assures the State Department of Education, School Food Service Program, or Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office where applicable, that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy with respect to determining the eligibility of children for free and reduced price meals in all National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and commodity-only schools under its jurisdiction.

In fulfilling its responsibilities the School Food Authority:

- A. Agrees to serve meals free to children from families whose income is at or below that listed in Attachment A.
- B. Agrees to serve meals at a reduced price to children from families whose income is at or below that listed in Attachment B.*

*NOTE: If the School Food Authority has determined that it will not serve reduced price meals, this reference should not be included in the policy and Attachment B should be deleted.

- C. Agrees to serve free or reduced price meals to children from families whose income falls within the criteria in (A) and (B) AFTER deductions are made for special hardship conditions which could not be reasonably anticipated or controlled by the household, due to unusually high medical expenses, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of reported income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, and disaster or casualty losses.

In addition, agrees to serve free or reduced price meals to foster children in certain cases.

D. Agrees that there will be no physical segregation of, or any other discrimination against, any child because of his inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens or tickets, or by any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals shall not be required to:

1. Work for their meals.
2. Use a separate lunchroom.
3. Go through a separate serving line.
4. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
5. Eat meals at a different time.
6. Eat a different meal from the meal sold to children paying the full price of such a meal.

E. Agrees that in the operation of child feeding programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

F. Agrees to establish and use a fair hearing procedure in cases of appeal by parents of the school's decisions on applications and in cases where the school official challenges the correctness of information contained in an application or of the continued eligibility of any child for a free or reduced price meal. During the appeal and hearing the child will continue to receive free or reduced price meals.

A record of all such appeals and challenges and their dispositions shall be retained for three years.

The hearing procedure shall provide:

1. A simple publicly-announced method for a family to make an oral or written request for a hearing;
2. An opportunity for the family to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person in presenting its appeal;
3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal;
4. That the hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience to the family and that adequate notice shall be given to the family as to the time and place of the hearing;

5. An opportunity for the family to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position;
6. An opportunity for the family to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses;
7. That the hearing shall be conducted and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in making the decision under appeal;
8. That the decision of the hearing official shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record;
9. That the family and any designated representative shall be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official;
10. That a written record shall be prepared with respect to each hearing, which shall include the decision under appeal; any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing; the decision of the hearing official, including the reasons therefor; and a copy of the notification to the family of the decision of the hearing official; and
11. That such written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of three years and shall be available for examination by the family or its representative at any reasonable time and place during such period.

G. Agrees to designate _____ as
(Name and Title)
the determining official who will review applications and make determinations of eligibility. He will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

H. Agrees to develop and send at the beginning of each school year, and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria, to the parent or guardian of each child a letter as outlined herein, including a form on which to make application for free or reduced price meals.

Parents will be requested to complete the application and return it to the determining official (named in G) for review. Such applications and documentation of action taken will be maintained for 3 years after the end of the fiscal year to which they pertain.

Applications may be filed at any time during the year and any parent enrolling a child in a school for the first time, at any time during the year, shall be supplied with such documents.

If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the same School Food Authority, his eligibility for a free or reduced price meal will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school.

All children from a family will receive the same benefits.

Parents or guardians will be notified individually within ten working days of the acceptance or denial of their applications. Children will be served meals immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

In cases of the application being rejected, the reason will be stated and parents or guardians will be informed of the hearing procedure.

The designated hearing official is _____ *

(Name, Title, Address)

*NOTE: This person must be someone who was not involved in the original eligibility determination. Further, it is suggested that he hold a position superior to that of the determining official.

- I. Agrees to establish a procedure to collect from children who pay for their meals and to account for the number of free and reduced price meals served. The procedure described in the attachment will be used in order that no other child in the school will consciously be made aware, by such procedure, of the identity of the children receiving reduced price or free meals. (Describe in specific detail in Attachment F the method(s) used in each school, or group of schools, which will be used to make collection from children.)*

*NOTE: See Sample Collection Procedures, page 43 for some suggested procedures.

- J. Agrees to submit to the State Agency or Regional Office where applicable, any alterations or amendments to the policy including eligibility criteria, applications, public announcements, etc., for approval prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective only upon approval and all changes in eligibility criteria be publicly announced in the same manner that was used at the beginning of the school year.

Attachments

The following attachments are adopted with and considered part of this policy:

Attachment A: Eligibility criteria for free meals

Attachment B: Eligibility criteria for reduced price meals

Attachment C: Letter to parents

Attachment D: Application Form

Attachment E: Public Release

Attachment F: Collection procedure(s) for preventing the overt identification of free and reduced price meal recipients allowing for an accurate daily count of free and reduced price meals

Approved by:

(Signature of) State
Director

(Signature of) Local School
Official

(Date)

(Date)

FAMILY SIZE - INCOME SCALE FOR FREE MEALS

This is the income scale used by _____
school food authority
to determine eligibility for free meals in the _____
(date)
school year.

Family Size	Income
	Insert Eligibility Scale for Free Meals

FAMILY SIZE - INCOME SCALE FOR REDUCED
PRICE MEALS

This is the income scale used by _____
school food authority

to determine eligibility for reduced price meals in

the _____ school year.
(date)

Family Size	Income
Insert Eligibility Scale for Reduced Price Meals	

PARENT LETTER

School Name _____

This is the parent letter exactly as we will send it out

(or sent out) on _____
(date)

(The appropriate letter to parents,
chosen from "policy attachments"
section should be inserted here.)

APPLICATION FORM

This is the application adopted by _____ School(s)
for the _____ school year:
(date)

(The appropriate application chosen
from "policy attachments" section
should be inserted here.)

PUBLIC RELEASE

School Food Authority: _____

This is the public release that we will send (or sent)

to _____ on _____
(news media) (date)

(See the "policy attachments"
section for a suggested format.)

COLLECTION PROCEDURE

_____ School(s) use(s) the following collection procedure:

(If more than one system of collection is used, explain them all and indicate which schools use which system.)

(Describe in detail, including the method used to distribute tokens, tickets, etc.; the method used to collect childrens' payments (where, when, how); and the method used to account for full price, free, and reduced price lunches each day. Attach copies of a free, a reduced price, and a full price ticket/token, if they are used. See the "policy attachments" section for suggested procedures.)

SAMPLE POLICY ATTACHMENTS



For Use in Schools Serving
Breakfast and Lunch and Serving
Free and Reduced Price Meals

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious meals every school day. Students may buy lunch for _____ cents and breakfast for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for meals free or at the reduced prices of _____ cents for lunch and _____ cents for breakfast. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free or reduced price meals for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing _____

at _____, _____
 _____ address _____ Name _____
 _____ phone _____.

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools
Serving Breakfast and
Lunch and Serving Free
and Reduced Price Meals

APPLICATION A

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parents: To apply for free or reduced price meals for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____

Total number in family _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income) Yearly _____

Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter please complete the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price meals regardless of your family income. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free or reduced price meals for your children has been: _____

Approved for free meals

Approved for reduced price meals at _____ cents for lunch and _____ cents for breakfast

Denied for the following reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____ at _____

(Name and title) (address)

(Phone)

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Lunch and Serving Both
Free and Reduced Price Lunches

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious lunches every school day. Students may buy lunch for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for lunches free or at the reduced price of _____ cents. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free or reduced price lunches for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing _____

at _____, _____
 _____ address _____ Name
 _____ phone _____

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such lunches for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Lunch and Serving Both
Free and Reduced Price Lunches

APPLICATION B

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parents: To apply for free or reduced price lunches for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____
Total number in family _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income) Yearly _____
Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price lunches regardless of your family income. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such lunches for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free or reduced price lunches for your children has been: _____

Approved for free lunches

Approved for reduced price lunches at _____ cents

Denied for the following reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____
at _____

(Name and title)

(address)

(Phone)

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Breakfast and Serving
Both Free and Reduced Price
Breakfasts

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious
breakfasts every school day. Students may buy breakfast for
cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for breakfasts free or at the reduced price of _____ cents. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free or reduced price breakfasts for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing

at _____, _____
address phone

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such breakfasts for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Breakfast and Serving
Both Free and Reduced Price
Breakfasts

APPLICATION C

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parent: To apply for free or reduced price breakfasts for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____

Total number in family _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income) Yearly _____

Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price breakfasts regardless of your family income. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such breakfasts for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free or reduced price breakfast for your children has been: _____

Approved for free breakfasts

Approved for reduced price
breakfasts at _____ cents

Denied for the following
reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____
at _____

(Name and title)

(address)

(Phone)

For Use in Schools Serving
Breakfast and Lunch and
Serving Only Free and Full
Price Meals

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious meals every school day. Students may buy lunch for _____ cents and breakfast for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for free meals. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free meals for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing _____

Name

at _____ , _____
 address phone

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools Serving
Breakfast and Lunch and
Serving Only Free and Full
Price Meals

APPLICATION D

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parents: To apply for free meals for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____

Total number in family: _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income) Yearly _____
Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free meals regardless of your family income. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free meals for your children has been:

Approved for free meals

Denied for the following
reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____
at _____

(Name and title)

(address)

(Phone)

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Lunch and Serving Only
Free and Full Price Lunches

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious lunches every school day. Students may buy lunch for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for free lunches. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free lunches for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing _____

at _____, _____
Name address phone

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such lunches for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Lunch and Serving Only
Free and Full Price Lunches

APPLICATION E

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parents: To apply for free lunches for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____

Total number in family _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income) Yearly _____

Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free lunches regardless of your family income. If you have **such** children living with you and wish to apply for such lunches for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free lunches for your children has been:

_____ Approved for free lunches
_____ Denied for the following
reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____

(Name and title)

(address)

(Phone)

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Breakfast and Serving
Only Free and Full Price
Breakfasts

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious breakfasts every school day. Students may buy breakfast for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown on the attached scale are eligible for free breakfasts. If your income is greater than those shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply for free breakfasts for your children, at anytime during the year, complete the attached application and return it to the school. The school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible within _____ days of receiving your application. If you do not agree with the school's decision you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing _____

Name

at _____, _____
address phone

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such breakfasts for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

If we can be of any further assistance or if your income changes during the year, please contact us.

Sincerely,

For Use in Schools Serving
Only Breakfast and Serving
Only Free and Full Price
Breakfasts

APPLICATION F

APPLICATION

Date _____

Parents: To apply for free breakfasts for your children,
fill out this form and return it to the school
office.

Names and grades of children for whom application is made:

Name and address of parent or guardian: _____

Total number in family _____

Total family income before deductions (including wages of all
working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security,
and all other income) Yearly _____
Monthly _____ Weekly _____
(fill out one)

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in
the attached family income scale, and you wish to apply under
any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter,
please complete the application form and also describe the
nature of your hardship here: _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free
breakfasts regardless of your family income. If you have
such children living with you and wish to apply for such
breakfasts for them, please check here: _____

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true
and correct to the best of my information and belief.

Signature of adult family member

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Your application for free breakfasts for your children has
been: _____ Approved for free breakfasts
_____ Denied for the following
reason: _____

You may appeal this decision by calling or writing _____

(Name and title)

(address)

(Phone)

SAMPLE
PUBLIC RELEASE

_____ today announced
(Local school food authority)

A free and reduced price meal policy for school children unable to pay the full price of meals served in schools under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Local school officials have adopted the following family size-income criteria for use in determining eligibility.

(Insert scale)

Children from families whose income is at or below those shown are eligible for meals free or at reduced prices. In addition, families not meeting this criteria but with other unusual expenses due to unusually high medical expenses, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, and disaster or casualty losses are urged to apply.

They may do so by filling in the application forms sent home in a letter to parents. Additional copies are available at the principal's office in each school. The information provided on the application will be confidential and will be used only for the purpose of determining eligibility. Applications may be submitted any time during the school year.

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If a family has such children living with them and wishes to apply for such meals for them, they should contact the school.

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin.

Under the provision of the policy the _____
(Title of Determining Official)
will review applications and determine eligibility.

If a parent is dissatisfied with the ruling of the official he may make a request either orally or in writing to _____
(Name and

_____ whose address is _____
Title of Hearing Official)

_____ for a hearing to appeal the
decision.

Hearing procedures are outlined in the policy.

A complete copy of the policy is on file in each school and in the office of the _____

(Central office)

where it may be reviewed by any interested party.

SAMPLE COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In collecting payments for meals served and in distributing tokens, tickets, etc., for free meal recipients, school administrators should ensure that there is no overt identification of free and reduced price meal recipients. Care should be taken to prevent such identification at the time the token/ticket is issued as well as in the serving line.

Additionally, any collection procedure should have a built-in accounting system to record the number of full price, reduced price, and free meals served daily. Keeping that count is a regulatory requirement.

The following methods are given as examples because they have been effectively employed across the nation. They can be used equally well in the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program.

Using Tickets or Tokens

Students go to designated areas (e.g., school office, cafeteria manager's office, school nurse, etc.) during the day. At such times those who pay full or reduced price do so and are issued a numbered ticket or token good for either a day or week as the case may be. Weekly tickets may be sold at a slight discount (e.g., daily cash charge 30 cents, weekly ticket \$1.25). Those students who receive free meals are given their ticket or token. All tickets or tokens are identical, except for a code number known only to authorized school personnel and used for accounting purposes. At all times, when paying, when tickets or tokens are issued, and during the meal there is no overt identification of free and reduced price meal recipients.

The homeroom teacher provides each child with an envelope for daily or weekly meal payments. Pupils return the envelopes with payment if paying full or reduced price or empty, if free, either to the homeroom teacher or to the school office. At a specified time either the homeroom teacher or school office issues tickets or tokens accordingly. All tickets or tokens are identical except for a code number known only to authorized school personnel and used for accounting purposes. At all times, when paying, when tickets or tokens are issued, and during the meal there is no overt identification of free and reduced price meal recipients.

Three specific examples of tickets and one example of tokens follow.

Daily Tickets

PS 31	5481
date _____	

PS 31	6782
date _____	

PS 31	8904
date _____	

In this case all tickets have a four digit code number. Tickets with the forth digit "one" are free, tickets with the fourth digit "two" are reduced price, and tickets with any other fourth digit are full price. This makes a daily count of meals served by type possible.

Weekly Tickets

PS 6	315
name	_____
	MTWTF

PS 6	249
name	_____
	MTWTF

PS 6	780
name	_____
	MTWTF

These tickets are given out weekly, punched daily in the serving line, and collected on Fridays. All tickets have a three digit code number. Tickets with the first digit "three" are free, tickets with the first digit "two" are reduced price and tickets with any other first digit are full price. This makes a daily count of meals served by type possible.

Weekly Tickets

Mon	801	Tues	802	Wed	803	Thurs	804	Fri	805
Mon	454	Tues	455	Wed	456	Thurs	457	Fri	458
Mon	190	Tues	191	Wed	192	Thurs	193	Fri	194

These strips of tickets are given out weekly and one ticket is collected each day in the serving line. The tickets have a three digit code number. Tickets with the second digit "zero" are free, tickets with the second digit "five" are reduced price, and tickets with any other second digit are full price. This makes a daily count of meals served by type possible.

Daily Tokens



In this case all tokens have a three letter code. Tokens with the second letter "P" are free, tokens with the second letter "S" are reduced price and tokens with any other second letter are full price. This makes a daily count of meals served by type possible.

Cash Only

In some schools an all cash system can be used in the lunchroom. Needy students will be issued the money required for purchase of a meal. It will be the responsibility of the school officials to insure that this money is used for the meal. The issuing and monitoring procedure shall be done in such a manner that the needy pupil does not suffer embarrassment or identification.

This is a viable procedure only in small schools where teachers accompany their classes to the lunchroom or where there is one person in the lunchroom who knows the identity of each child so that their names can be checked off a master list as they are served. That list can then be used for keeping the daily count of meals served by type.

Policy Checklist

If you develop your own policy you should compare it to the checklist in this section to ensure that it contains all the necessary elements.



FREE AND REDUCED PRICE POLICY CHECKLIST

If you develop your own policy, letter to parents, public release, or application, you should check it against this list to ensure that it contains all the items required.

DOES THE POLICY STATEMENT CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING:

- Reference to both lunch and breakfast programs, if you participate in both programs.
- Reference to both free and reduced price meals only if you offer both of these benefits.
- Title of official designated to make the eligibility determinations.
- Family size and income criteria to determine eligibility, including the four specified hardship provisions and the foster children provision.
- Application procedure.
- Description of collection procedure(s).
- Nondiscrimination assurances.
- Assurance that application will be accepted at any time during the school year.
- Assurance that free and reduced price meal recipients may transfer eligibility within school district.
- Assurance that all children in the same family will receive same benefits.
- Statement that policy will be announced by means of a letter to parents.
- Assurance that if lunch and breakfast are served, that the eligibility criteria is the same for both.
- Complete hearing procedure.
- Assurance that free and reduced price meal recipients will continue to receive benefits during the time an appeal is pending.
- Copy of Public Release.
- Copy of Application.

- Copy of letter to parents.
- Copy of family size-income scale.
- Copy of collection procedure(s).

DOES THE LETTER TO PARENTS CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING:

- Contain complete eligibility criteria, including the four specified hardship conditions and statement of possible eligibility of foster children.
- Indicate application is included.
- Provide instructions for submission of application.
- Indicate how to appeal (oral/written).
- Indicate where to direct appeal.
- Give the reduced price for lunch and for breakfast when reduced price meals are offered.
- Contain the statement: "In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of his race, sex, color, or national origin."

APPLICATION FORM

- Is application clear and simple?
- Is information requested limited to that required to determine eligibility?
- Does it include information on where to submit it?
- Does it include the statement: "In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price meals regardless of your family income. If you have such children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please contact us."
- Does it include the statement: "If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the family income scale as shown, and you wish to apply for free or reduced price meals for your children under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete this application form and also describe the nature of your hardship."

Does the application request information dealing with:

- a) Number in family.
- b) Family income.
- c) Statement of true and accurate information.
- d) Signature of adult family member.

DOES PUBLIC RELEASE CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING:

- Eligibility criteria, including the four specified hardship conditions and the statement of possible eligibility of foster children.
- Instructions for obtaining application.
- Instructions for appeal (oral/written).
- Nondiscrimination Statement

COLLECTION PROCEDURE

- Does the collection method(s) prevent overt identification of children receiving free or reduced price meals at the time meal is served?
- Does the collection method(s) prevent overt identification of children receiving free or reduced price meals at the time the medium of exchange (ticket, token, etc.) is obtained?



Tuition School Policy

Tuition and boarding schools which do not charge separately for meals may use a shortened policy such as the one in this section.



FREE AND REDUCED PRICE POLICY FOR TUITION
AND BOARDING SCHOOLS

Part 245 of the regulations dealing with determining eligibility of children for free and reduced price meals is applicable to tuition schools where no separate charges are made for meals.

When meals are included in the tuition fees or the school has sufficient income to provide meal service to all students the school may file a simplified policy statement in accordance with FNS Instruction 782-3, Rev. 1. The Instruction states that the simplified policy may be worded to the effect that the entire enrollment is being served the same meals, and that there is no physical segregation of or other discrimination against any child in the course of the meal service.

Such a policy follows:

" _____ assures the State educational agency or Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office where applicable that all children in attendance are being served the same meal(s) with no physical segregation of, or other discrimination against, any child because of race, sex, color, national origin, or ability to pay."

However, if a tuition or boarding school claims Section 11 reimbursement for free or reduced price meals they must add the following sentences to that given above:

"We have family size-income data on all children for whom Section 11 reimbursement is claimed; and assure the State educational agency or Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office where applicable that they meet the prescribed eligibility criteria and that we keep a daily count of all meals so claimed. A copy of the family income scale is attached."



Addendum

If you serve an area with high concentrations of non-English speaking parents, you should develop the letters to parents and applications in the language of the people. This section contains the parent letter and application in Spanish.





Querido padre o guardián:

La escuela _____ sirve comidas alimenticias diariamente durante los días escolares. Los estudiantes pueden comprar el almuerzo por _____ centavos y el desayuno por _____ centavos.

Niños de familias cuyos ingresos son a nivel o bajo el nivel según la escala que le incluimos, califican para obtener comidas gratis o a precio reducido de _____ centavos por el almuerzo y _____ centavos por el desayuno. Si su ingreso es mayor que lo que se indica, aun sus hijos pueden ser elegibles bajo las siguientes condiciones. Si usted tiene cuentas médicas en exceso, gasto de domicilio que excede treinta por ciento de su ingreso, gasto en educación especializada para su hijo por causa de una incapacidad física o mental o pérdidas a consecuencia de desastres o accidentales.

Para aplicar por comidas gratis o a precio reducido para sus hijos, cualquier tiempo durante el año, favor de completar la aplicación adjunta y remitirla a la escuela.

La escuela se tomara _____ días en contestarle al respecto informándole si sus hijos son elegibles. Si usted no acepta la decisión elegada, tiene derecho a solicitar para una audiencia. Para ello, sirvase escribir a _____ Sr(a) _____, _____ o llame al _____
(nombre) (dirección)

(teléfono)

Hay casos en que niños al cuidado de una familia, califican para estos beneficios. Si tiene tales niños en su residencia y desea que estos niños participen en las comidas, favor de indicarlo en la aplicación.

A todos los niños se les trata igual, no importa si paguen o no. En los programas de alimentación escolar los niños no serán discriminados a causa de su raza, sexo, color u origen de nacionalidad.

Tenga la bondad de notificarnos en caso de algún cambio en sus ingresos, o si le podemos servir en algo más.

Sinceramente,

Para uso en las escuelas que
que sirven comidas gratis
y a precios reducidos.

APLICACIÓN

Fecha _____

Padres: Llénese este formulario para aplicar por comidas gratis o a precios reducidos para sus niños y devuélvelo a la oficina de la escuela.

Nombre y grado de los niños para quién la aplicación se hace:

Nombre y dirección de padres o guardián: _____

Número de miembros en la familia _____

Total de ingresos antes de deducciones (incluya sueldos de todos los miembros de la familia que trabajan, pagos de beneficencia, pensiones, seguro social, y toda entrada de dinero). Anual \$ _____ Mensual \$ _____

Semanal \$ _____ (llene uno)

Si su ingreso total excede la cantidad indicada en la escala adjunta y usted desea aplicar bajo una de las condiciones especiales nombradas anteriormente en la carta, favor de completar este formulario y describa en detalle la condición o condiciones de su dificultad. _____

Hay casos en que niños al cuidado de una familia son calificados para obtener comidas gratis o a precios reducidos; no importa el ingreso de la familia. Si tiene tales niños en su casa y desea que participen en las comidas, favor de indicar aquí: _____

Certifico que toda la información dada en este formulario es la verdad, correcta y de acuerdo con mi mejor creencia.

_____ firma (jefe de la familia)

PARA USO DE LA ESCUELA UNICAMENTE.

Su aplicación para obtener comidas gratis o a precios reducidos para sus niños ha sido:

_____ aprobada/comidas gratis
_____ aprobada/comidas a precios reducidos
a _____ centavos para almuerzo y _____
centavos para desayuno.

_____ Rehusado

Razón por la cual: _____

Usted puede apelar esta decisión escribiendo a _____

_____ (nombre, título oficial de audiencias)

_____ (dirección) o llame

_____ (al teléfono)

